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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

3

OFFICE OF PLANNING

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UPPER-GEORGIA AVENUE LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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MAYOR'S PUBLIC HEARING

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2007

11

6:33 P.M. to 7:51 P.M.

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13

EMERY RECREATION CENTER

14

5701 GEORGIA AVENUE, N.W.

15

SECOND FLOOR

16

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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1           A P P E A R A N C E S

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3 D.C. GOVERNMENT ATTENDEES:

4   COUNCILMEMBER MURIEL BOWSER

5   D.C. CITY COUNCIL

6   WARD 4

7

8   HARRIET TREGONING

9   Director

10   Office of Planning

11

12   GERALDINE GARDNER

13   Acting Director

14   Neighborhood Planning

15

16   ANITA HAIRSTON

17   Office of Planning

18

19   MALAIKA ABERNATHY

20   Office of Planning

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (6:33 P.M.)

3 WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

4 MS. HAIRSTON: It is 6:33. I want to

5 welcome you all to the Upper-Georgia Avenue Land

6 Development Plan. My name is Anita Hairston. I am

7 the chief of staff with the D.C. Office of Planning.

8 I was the Ward 4 neighborhood planner with the D.C.

9 Office of Planning assisting with this project and

10 shepherding it through the process.

11 Prior to letting you know about this

12 culmination of a year's worth of effort that comes out

13 of this Upper-Georgia Avenue Plan, I also want to

14 introduce to you a number of folks from our office.

15 Our Office Director is Harriet Tregoning.

16 Our Ward 4 Neighborhood Planner, newly minted, is

17 Malaika Abernathy. Our Acting Associate Director of

18 Neighborhood Planning, who is taking her seat now, is

19 Geraldine Gardner.

20 I also wanted to let you know that we have

21 representatives from our consultant team that assisted  
22 with the Upper-Georgia Avenue Land Development Plan,  
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1 Don Edwards and Shannon Yadsko.

2 Also, I wanted to welcome and say that we  
3 are glad that our Ward 4 Councilmember is here,  
4 Muriel Bowser, and wanted to give her an opportunity  
5 to give us some greetings and remarks.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BOWSER: Well, thank you,  
7 Anita. Welcome everyone. I'm delighted to see so  
8 many of you here and delighted to have the opportunity  
9 to talk about Georgia Avenue. We know that Georgia  
10 Avenue is a significant part of what our ward will be  
11 concentrating on for many, many months to come.

12 I always like to start when we talk about  
13 Georgia Avenue to talk about some of our early  
14 successes, and we are sitting in one right now with  
15 the Emery Recreation Center.

16 This was a significant investment by the  
17 government for this neighborhood to make sure that our  
18 seniors, our young people, and everyone in between  
19 could have an opportunity to recreate right here in  
20 their neighborhood. These are the types of

21 investments that we are going to talk about. Some of  
22 these have been identified in the plan as well.

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1 I heard firsthand from many of you and many  
2 thousands more the importance of redeveloping Georgia  
3 Avenue for our ward. Redeveloping Georgia Avenue and  
4 our other great corridors along with fixing our  
5 schools and focusing on our neighborhoods is really a  
6 top priority for us.

7 We know that this avenue is a great street.  
8 It abuts wonderful, stable neighborhoods on both  
9 sides, on both east and west. It is a mix of small  
10 and diverse businesses as well.

11 Many of these business owners have called  
12 Georgia Avenue home for many, many decades. They have  
13 stuck in there through the good times and the bad  
14 times. We have many residents who fit that  
15 description as well.

16 What we've been talking about for many  
17 months and what this plan seeks to address is what is  
18 missing on Georgia Avenue. We know that firsthand,  
19 that significant public and private investment is one  
20 of the biggest things that is missing.

21        We have lacked the will and the resources to  
22 really get it done from both sides, from the executive  
0008

1 side and sometimes from the legislative side. I think  
2 now that we stand at a great point in our government's  
3 history, because we have an executive and a  
4 legislative branch that is really willing to push the  
5 resources urgently to the Avenue where they are  
6 needed.

7        We know that we need to study a lot of  
8 things and we have done a lot of studying, and this  
9 plan stands as another addition to those studies. It  
10 has taught us a lot.

11       We know how important it is to make sure we  
12 know what zoning and density our neighborhoods can  
13 accommodate, what type of traffic and parking that our  
14 streets need.

15       We know that it is also important to show  
16 the spending power of our neighborhoods, so that when  
17 we go out to the market to attract retailers and to  
18 attract housing and to attract other uses, that we can  
19 say that our neighborhood can support these things.

20       We have had a great series of studies. This



21 is another great one which I want to stand here today  
22 to fully support in its very broad suggestions for  
0009

1 what we can do on the upper part of Georgia Avenue,  
2 but I also want to emphasize to you and to the mayor  
3 that it is time for us to act.

4 It is time for us to look at detailed plans  
5 of action, make sure that we have realistic funding  
6 schemes the make sure that the council and the mayor  
7 can work together with the community to get these  
8 things accomplished.

9 I wanted to say a couple of things about  
10 what I have heard from many of you in terms of what  
11 you want to see on Georgia Avenue, and I'm sure we  
12 will hear some of that today.

13 What neighbors have told me across this ward  
14 is that they want to be able to shop, dine, live,  
15 work, and play right on the Avenue. This means, as we  
16 all understand, having a diversity of uses and  
17 amenities, including: grocery stores, clothing stores,  
18 services, and restaurants.

19 Neighbors have told me across this ward that  
20 "We're tired of leaving the District for quality

21 shopping and convenient parking. We're tired of  
22 seeing all of our dollars go to Silver Spring or go to  
0010

1 Bethesda."

2 Neighbors have told me that "We want to make  
3 our streets clean and safe."

4 We know that part of any redevelopment is  
5 going to require that we clean up our streets of  
6 graffiti and trash. It's going to require that we  
7 make our streets safe with adequate policing and  
8 everything that is going to make us feel safe to walk  
9 and shop along Georgia Avenue.

10 We also want safe and affordable parking  
11 options, which I'm sure that many of us will discuss  
12 tonight. It is very important as we compete in a  
13 regional market that we can attract our residents with  
14 quality and affordable parking.

15 Folks also tell us, and I experience this  
16 quite often, that "We don't want to take our lives  
17 into our hands when we just cross the street." We are  
18 looking for a safe Georgia Avenue for pedestrians and  
19 for vehicles alike.

20 It is also very important, and I hear this

21 from neighbors all the time, that we don't want to  
22 displace residents. We have residents that are

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1 committed to being in Ward 4, committed to living  
2 along Georgia Avenue. We want to make sure that we  
3 aren't pushing people out just to bring in new stuff.

4 That goes for our businesses, too. We want  
5 to make sure that we are preparing our businesses now  
6 to be ready to take part in what is the new Georgia  
7 Avenue.

8 Preserving affordable housing is important  
9 to us, preserving quality retail options and letting  
10 folks stay on the Avenue who have invested for so many  
11 years on the Avenue is very important to us.

12 I have listened closely over these many  
13 months and will continue to listen to the priorities  
14 of our residents, but what I want to say tonight is to  
15 the Mayor. We need substantial political leadership  
16 here. We need the will to get this done, and we need  
17 it from all sides.

18 We need a substantial amount of public and  
19 private investment as well, and we have to be vigilant  
20 on this point. We have seen a lot of resources

21 invested in the core, the baseball stadium and the  
22 waterfront. Where is the money for investing in our  
0012

1 neighborhoods? We have to watch this point. Other  
2 wards and neighborhoods are scrambling for some of the  
3 existing resources, the TIF dollars. Our CFO is even  
4 telling us to slow down on tapping into those  
5 resources. We have to watch it. We have to move  
6 expeditiously on Georgia Avenue. The time to move is  
7 now. The well we need to tap into is not infinite,  
8 and the market in which we need to revitalize and  
9 attract great housing, retail, and dining options  
10 changes quickly.

11 I am here tonight, and I'll summarize here,  
12 for really five reasons: to support the broad outlines  
13 of this plan; to encourage the executive to think more  
14 about innovative parking options that make the best use  
15 of land; thirdly, to protect our neighborhoods, make  
16 sure that they are appropriately buffered from any  
17 additions to the Avenue; number four, keep our  
18 community engaged in every step, making sure that  
19 businesses and residents are a part of the new Avenue,  
20 not pushed out; and number five, act on this plan.

21 Give us a detailed plan of action so that we  
22 can make sure that these recommendations don't just  
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1 wind up on a shelf, but make this a study that leads  
2 to a plan that changes the landscape of Georgia  
3 Avenue.

4 I want to thank you for your presence here  
5 tonight, and thank you for your continued  
6 participation in whatever happens next on Georgia  
7 Avenue.

8 (Applause.)

#### 9 OVERVIEW OF PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

10 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you, Council Member  
11 Bowser. Thank you for that challenge, and we are  
12 going to do what we can to be up to that challenge.  
13 We look forward to all the people in this room as well  
14 as your neighbors and fellow merchants to helping us  
15 to stay accountable to those challenges.

16 The Upper-Georgia Avenue Land Development  
17 Plan is part of the Great Streets Initiative, and  
18 again it is a culmination of over a year's worth of  
19 work by the community, elected leadership, merchants,  
20 other stakeholders, and those who care about Georgia

21 Avenue.

22 We focused on the areas between Decatur

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1 Street, Northwest, and Eastern Avenue, Northwest. It

2 is a part of the Great Streets Initiative, which

3 addresses land use, economic and business development,

4 open space, cultural resources.

5 The purpose of this plan, one of the

6 purposes of this plan, is to support the Department of

7 Transportation's recommendations for streetscape and

8 circulation improvements.

9 We heard that enhancing retail

10 opportunities, especially those with local small

11 businesses, along the corridor is a critical issue

12 here on Georgia Avenue. It is one reason why the

13 mayor launched the retail action strategy just at the

14 corner of Georgia and Missouri Avenue in April.

15 This particular strategy will, again, help

16 inform the action plan that we put together for the

17 Upper-Georgia Avenue Plan and for the entire corridor.

18 It also focuses on other parts of the District as

19 well, but we understand the importance of

20 Upper-Georgia Avenue.

21       We look forward to hearing and recording  
22 your testimony this evening regarding the plan. We  
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1 recognize that this is a draft document, and we  
2 welcome your input. We want to know how it can be  
3 strengthened and enhanced prior to submitting it to  
4 the council for consideration.

5       Also, in addition to the retail action  
6 strategy, we are doing some complimentary work on  
7 Kennedy Street Northwest. Some of you may be involved  
8 with those efforts. It is important because Kennedy  
9 Street is also a major commercial corridor.

10       These need to be considered together because  
11 it is important to have retail on Georgia Avenue that  
12 compliments the retail on Kennedy Street, other uses  
13 that are complimentary to one another, so that we can  
14 make sure that we are consistent among these important  
15 mixed-use and retail corridors.

16       With that, I want to give a brief overview  
17 of the Upper-Georgia Avenue Land Development Plan. I  
18 am just going to take a little bit of time. The focus  
19 of this meeting is to hear the comments that you have  
20 and the testimony that you have, but I wanted to give

21 you a brief overview of the plan.

22 (Slide presentation in progress.)

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1 MS. HAIRSTON: The purpose of this  
2 particular plan is to transform Georgia Avenue into a  
3 "great street." It is important to leverage the  
4 public and private investments, that Councilmember  
5 Bowser talked about, in order to create a great  
6 street.

7 We want to have this plan guide the growth  
8 and development. We understand that there are  
9 development interests, someone framed them as  
10 "development pressures," for this area and so it is  
11 important that we guide the growth and development  
12 that happens.

13 We want to create a strategy that addresses  
14 some of the key community issues, and we want to  
15 establish a shared vision among residents, merchants,  
16 property owners, local community leaders and our  
17 institutional partners as well.

18 The plan was developed over the past year  
19 through communitywide meetings, through briefings with  
20 ANCs and civic associations, through an advisory



21 committee that was composed of Ward 4 stakeholders  
22 including merchants and neighborhood leaders as well  
0017

1 as the office of the Ward 4 councilmember.

2 We also had a consultant team that was  
3 extremely helpful to us in the areas of community  
4 outreach and real estate market analysis as well as  
5 land use analysis.

6 We had critical participation from our other  
7 district agencies. Just a few are listed here, but  
8 these are some of the key ones that helped us  
9 throughout the process and will continue to help us as  
10 we implement this plan.

11 Just a brief overview of some of the issues  
12 and community assets that have been talked about. In  
13 addition to the lack of retail diversity, the need for  
14 a consistent streetscape and public ground, the fact  
15 that along the corridor there is a missing sense of  
16 center of activity, pedestrian safety, and  
17 transportation were concerns as well.

18 But, again, the area has a number of  
19 different community assets, including: stable  
20 residential areas, a great deal of redevelopment

21 potential; recent public and private investment,  
22 historic resources; transit, improving transit

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1 infrastructure,  
2       What is really critical is our engaged  
3 community organization that understand the needs of  
4 the Avenue and understand how we need to get to  
5 transforming Georgia Avenue into a great street.

6       Key elements of the plan, many of you have  
7 had the opportunity to see and review the  
8 Upper-Georgia Avenue Plan. The draft is pictured  
9 there on the right.

10       It consists of an executive summary and it  
11 just provides an overview of the plan, an  
12 introduction to the plan, and it talks a little bit  
13 about some of the things that I mentioned before in  
14 terms of issues and assets and how we also got through  
15 the planning process, what input we took.

16       The corridor assessment focuses on existing  
17 uses, land use, transportation, open space, cultural  
18 resources, the business environment. These are some  
19 of the major issues that we needed to take a look at.  
20 It also includes a market assessment that looks at

21 retail, housing, and office uses.

22 Key redevelopment sites are discussed as

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1 well, and these are ones that have been discussed

2 through the public engagement process, the public

3 workshops. They are summarized there, and some of the

4 recommendations for those sites.

5 One of the things that may be a little bit

6 newer to you is this implementation plan. We

7 indicated that that was going to be the last step in

8 the planning process, that we would pull together all

9 of the recommendations and determine how do we get

10 from point A to point B, how do we get from where we

11 are to where it is that we want to be in terms of

12 transforming Upper-Georgia Avenue into a great street.

13 I am going to go over a couple of those, or I am going

14 to go over all of those just shortly.

15 Our key redevelopment areas in the

16 Upper-Georgia Avenue Plan, these should be familiar to

17 many of you. I recognize a number of you from our

18 community meetings, and you've seen these particular

19 redevelopment areas before: the gateway, Eastern

20 Avenue and Geranium and Hemlock Streets, Piney Branch

21 Road, Missouri Avenue, Kennedy Street and Arkansas  
22 Avenue. The Plan talks about a number of different  
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1 goals that we can have as it relates to housing, new  
2 retail development, and new office development.

3 The Corridor Revitalization Plan, these are  
4 the 10 steps, and this is towards the end of the plan.  
5 You will find this just at the back of the plan. The  
6 Revitalization Plan that applies to the entire  
7 corridor, these are recommendations that will help us  
8 transform Upper-Georgia Avenue.

9 The first one, investigate financial  
10 incentives to improve and develop the key  
11 redevelopment sites, the four that were mentioned  
12 before.

13 We want to think about refining our  
14 mixed-use districts to help us define some of the uses  
15 that we do and don't want to see in our mixed-use  
16 districts that are along Upper-Georgia Avenue.

17 We also want to think about strategic  
18 acquisition of vacant and under-utilized properties so  
19 that we can provide community improvement but also  
20 affordable housing, preservation and development of

21 affordable housing. That is item number four. We are  
22 going to do that through our inclusionary zoning  
0021

1 policy that applies to this Avenue.

2 Also, there is a recommendation to establish  
3 a merchants association or maybe that's a number of  
4 associations that are established along the avenue to  
5 promote retail development and promote small business  
6 retention as well.

7 Improving the public ground is also a major  
8 component of the plan, that is, our streetscapes with  
9 enhanced sidewalks, benches, lighting, bus shelters,  
10 all of those things that make traveling up and down  
11 the Avenue as a pedestrian enjoyable and makes for a  
12 great street.

13 Seven, enhance the open space network  
14 through the Fort Circle Park Trail, so thinking along  
15 Missouri Avenue including Fort Stevens and other  
16 important sites; state-of-the-art critical facilities,  
17 critical services facilities, on Georgia Avenue, fire  
18 facilities and police facilities.

19 We also heard that it was important to  
20 consider Walter Reed, and so we have recommendations

21 in that plan. As has already been mentioned,  
22 innovative parking solutions is an important element  
0022

1 of the plan. Those are some of the major  
2 recommendations that come out of that, this  
3 Upper-Georgia plan.

4 With that, I am going to turn it over to  
5 Malaika Abernathy, who is going to talk about public  
6 outreach and our next steps and give us instructions  
7 for the rest of the evening.

8 MS. ABERNATHY: Hi, all. My name is Malaika  
9 Abernathy for the record. I am the Ward 4 planner  
10 with the Office of Planning, and I will just give you  
11 a brief overview of how we communicated with you all  
12 about this great plan that you all worked on to  
13 provide us with comments.

14 Basically, we had a number of ways in which  
15 you can provide us with comments about the plan.  
16 Tonight is the first step in that stage. You can  
17 provide us with comments orally. Many of you have  
18 already signed up and we will have an opportunity for  
19 you to provide us with your oral testimony later on in  
20 the agenda.

21       We will also be receiving written testimony  
22 from now until September 28, so this is not the only  
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1 time that you are allowed to comment on the plan. We  
2 have a number of ways that you can do so.

3       We have also tried our best to get the word  
4 out. We have sent postcards to many of you that have  
5 been on our distribution list. Many of you that are  
6 participating in the planning process, notices to  
7 various citywide newspapers have also been sent out,  
8 for instance, D.C. North, D.C. Register, the City  
9 Paper and Hill Rag. Notices on this public hearing  
10 have been advertised.

11       We have also presented to some ANCs and we  
12 will continue to do that effort until September. We  
13 have encouraged many of our ANC and community groups  
14 to also help us in this initiative and get the word  
15 out just by word of mouth.

16       Tell your neighbors, tell your community  
17 residents, tell your friends that this plan relates to  
18 your home and your community, and we encourage you to  
19 participate and comment on the plan.

20       Also, the hard copy of the plan is available

21 at a number of public institutions, for instance,  
22 downstairs at Emery Rec, here in Emery Rec. It is  
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1 also available on our Web site at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).  
2 We also have it available at Shepherd Park,  
3 Fort Stevens Center, and the Fourth District  
4 Headquarters.

5 What are the next steps? We will make an  
6 added effort to engage our civics and our ANCs, like I  
7 stated before, until that September 28 deadline. We  
8 will be accepting written comments. You can send all  
9 of your written comments directly to me. I will give  
10 you my contact information afterwards.

11 The draft plan, once we receive all of the  
12 comments, we will then combine all of the comments we  
13 have received and transmit those comments as well as  
14 the draft plan, the revised draft plan, that will  
15 include all of these comments to the City Council.  
16 The council will then hold its own public hearing in  
17 late October to consider approval of the plan as a  
18 small-area plan.

19 This is my contact information, Malaika  
20 Abernathy, Neighborhood Ward 4 Planner. I can be



21 reached in any of those ways; okay. Thank you for  
22 listening.

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1 Right now, what we will do is we will open  
2 it up for public testimony. Many of you have already  
3 provided me with your names and addresses. What we  
4 will do is we will call up people one by one who have  
5 previously signed up.

6 You will have three minutes to provide us  
7 with your public testimony. When you approach the  
8 mike, please provide clearly your name, your address,  
9 your affiliation, as well as your phone number.

10 Our Staff Assistant Shanelle, who is in the  
11 back, Shanelle, she will then tell you when time is  
12 up. Once you see the green sign raised, please stop  
13 your testimony and we will proceed with the next  
14 person. After all the people have testified, we will  
15 open it up for public comment; okay.

16 What I will do is start the list now. I  
17 will just call up the first person. Do you have the  
18 list, Shanelle?

19 (Staff assistant complies.)

20 MS. ABERNATHY: The first person is Laura

21 Scott. She is from Emery Beacon of Light. PUBLIC

22 COMMENT PERIOD

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1 MS. SCOTT: Good evening. As Malaika  
2 stated, I'm Laura Scott. I am the program manager for  
3 Commercial Corridor and Small Business Development at  
4 the Emery Beacon of Light. We are located at  
5 6120 Georgia Avenue, Northwest. The phone number is  
6 (202) 829-5732.

7 Good evening, Councilmember Bowser, Office  
8 of Planning Staff, and area stakeholders. Thank you  
9 for this opportunity to appear before you this  
10 evening.

11 The Emery Beacon of Light is a faith-based  
12 nonprofit CDC located, as I stated, at 6120 Georgia  
13 Avenue. We grew out of the ministries of Emery  
14 United Methodist Church.

15 EBOL is committed to the revitalization of  
16 Brightwood. To that end, we are planning a mixed-use  
17 housing and commercial project in partnership with  
18 Emery United Methodist Church in the 6100 block of  
19 Georgia Avenue. The mixed-use project will not only  
20 offer affordable housing to seniors, homeless, and

21 those with HIV/AIDS, but also will include underground  
22 parking.

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1 EBOL is making great strides in community  
2 development. With the financial support of DHCD, we  
3 have a storefront improvement project and a crime and  
4 drug prevention program.

5 We have leveraged neighborhood investment  
6 funds from the District's Office of Planning and  
7 Economic Development and funds from DHCD to implement  
8 programs for commercial corridor and small business  
9 development.

10 We offer technical assistance to small  
11 businesses. Also, we are organizing the Beacon  
12 Brightwood Business Alliance, which already has more  
13 than 30 business owners, and we are growing rapidly.

14 Recently, we began a Clean Green Safe  
15 Initiative that employee area homeless individuals to  
16 clean up Kennedy Street and Georgia Avenue commercial  
17 corridors. There is a graffiti removal component as  
18 well. The "Beacon Clean Team," as we call them, is  
19 uniformed and visible on the corridors.

20 EBOL is pooling resources together to begin

21 the revitalization process in Brightwood. However,  
22 evidence shows that neighborhood revitalization

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1 efforts have the most impact and are most efficient  
2 when main streets' and great streets' dollars are  
3 invested in the neighborhood simultaneously.

4 For too many years, development of Georgia  
5 Avenue has been limited to the areas north of  
6 Walter Reed and Petworth South and Brightwood, sadly,  
7 largely has been overlooked.

8 We urge the mayor and City Council to  
9 rectify this situation by giving Brightwood priority  
10 in the implementation of the Upper-Georgia Avenue  
11 Great Streets Plan.

12 We urge that funds under this initiative be  
13 allocated to the Brightwood segment of the corridor  
14 first and then allocated to neighborhoods north of  
15 Brightwood. Also, we understand that another main  
16 street designation will be made in the next year. We  
17 urge you to allocate those funds to Brightwood as  
18 well.

19 I am going to wrap up. Finally, we urge you  
20 to adopt to incorporate the 2007 Brightwood

21 Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan that was recently  
22 presented to the District Planning Office.

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1           The Beacon of Light along with Emery United  
2 Methodist Church will make every effort to support any  
3 initiatives that make our neighborhood a better, safe  
4 place to worship and live.

5           Thank you for the opportunity.

6           MS. ABERNATHY: The next speaker is  
7 Mr. T.A. Oakta.

8           MR. OAKTA: Thank you. I am T.A. Oakta. I  
9 am executive director of the Fourteenth Street Uptown  
10 Business Council, 4700 Fourteenth Street, Northwest.  
11 Telephone is (202) 291-8696.

12           As founder and executive director of the  
13 Uptown Business Council, we continue to offer our  
14 support and our input for this massive land  
15 development project along the famed Georgia Avenue  
16 corridor.

17           As an organization, one of our driving  
18 concerns is maintaining a sense of neighborhood,  
19 community, business, and property ownership,  
20 particularly amongst African Americans.

21           One of the unique nuances of UBC is our  
22 percentage of African-American professionals and  
0030

1 business owners who not only own their own businesses  
2 or property in the Upper-Fourteenth Street Corridor,  
3 but they also live right in the very neighborhood that  
4 they either service or own their property.

5           We feel the Georgia Avenue Plan and other  
6 development projects are missing a tremendous  
7 opportunity and a key component to any true  
8 neighborhood development when it doesn't place an  
9 equal amount of energy and effort in establishing a  
10 social component to its land development vision.

11           As the executive branch is considering the  
12 finalization of our Georgia Avenue plans as well as  
13 other commercial development projects -- Kennedy  
14 Street, Fourteenth Street, Uptown H Street amongst  
15 others -- we urge them to consider the following:

16           Incorporating a social component within  
17 these development plans to address the critical need  
18 for both skilled and unskilled training provided to  
19 African-American males 17 years of age and older;

20           As part of that executive office, establish

21 an office of African-American Men Affairs that could  
22 begin the process of identifying existing or forming  
0031

1 organizations to incorporate this training component  
2 in this and any future commercial or residential  
3 development projects;

4 Establish business incubators focused on  
5 African-American entrepreneurs to grow and maintain a  
6 viable presence on the avenue. Incorporate store  
7 management improvements to existing business  
8 operations expressed by the community to be desirable  
9 but are lacking;

10 Provide target interior layout assistance to  
11 maximize sales and/or product service exposure in an  
12 effort to retain existing operations and make them  
13 viable;

14 Establish mission teams to identify, create,  
15 and maintain a skilled and unskilled labor force  
16 within the affected communities at all phases of the  
17 project through completion to ongoing business  
18 operations; and

19 Redefining what we consider to be both  
20 affordable and housing in the District of Columbia so

21 as to attract more families.

22 What we see as the key to all our

0032

1 neighborhood development within the Ward 1 and Ward 4

2 corridors of the Georgia Avenue proposal is a plan to

3 increase commercial property ownership by the

4 residents of those wards, or, at the very least,

5 ownership of the varying business operations along the

6 corridor.

7 In closing, I would be remiss in my duties

8 as executive director if I didn't encourage the mayor

9 to look at our few blocks along upper Fourteenth

10 Street, about five blocks from his own family home.

11 We both show and represent a tremendous

12 opportunity of what small-pocketed areas like ours

13 could look like if we received the same attention as

14 the famed Georgia Avenue or the equally infamous

15 Kennedy Street.

16 I would urge his office to not be so focused

17 on the larger corridors and forget about his own front

18 yard. Remember, "Charity begins at home."

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)



21 MS. ABERNATHY: The next speaker is  
22 Dwayne Toliver.

0033

1 Dwayne Toliver?

2 MR. TOLIVER: Good evening. First off, I  
3 want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with  
4 you. I want to give special acknowledgment to the  
5 Office of Planning and the hard work that they have  
6 done as well as the other members of the Committee.

7 I am speaking to you -- oh, I missed my  
8 address. Actually, I forgot that. It's 1326 Hemlock  
9 Street, Northwest. I am speaking to you as a member  
10 of the Advisory Committee.

11 The most important that we need to address  
12 we believe is who I going to pay for the improvements  
13 along Georgia Avenue, when are they going to be paid  
14 for, and how are they going to be paid for. These are  
15 the things that are going to touch most of the  
16 citizens here today, the stakeholders, and those who  
17 have interest in the Georgia Avenue redevelopment.

18 With respect to the retail operations, We  
19 feel it is increasingly significant to support and  
20 encourage D.C. retail operations so that people within

21 our community buy within our community.

22 We no longer move to sell Silver Spring or

0034

1 Bethesda to do our shopping, to do our dining, and to

2 do our everyday activities that we could do along the

3 corridor.

4 We believe that it is essential to address

5 the issue of parking. The lack of parking on Georgia

6 Avenue is stifling a lot of the economic development

7 within that area.

8 A lot of the people that I have spoken with,

9 with respect to the redevelopment of the upper-Georgia

10 Avenue area, have cited the lack of parking as one of

11 the primary reasons why they are not there. In fact,

12 several business owners or potential business owners

13 that I have talked with have also cited the lack of

14 parking.

15 It is important that we integrate the

16 efforts of the city with those of those who are going

17 to pay the taxes within the city. It is going to

18 require a lot of will and courage for the politicians

19 in our city, the elected officials, to make tough

20 decisions as to issues relating to up zoning,

21 condemnations, and taking issues in order to effect  
22 the goals set forth in the plan.

0035

1           Ultimately, the issues of multifamily  
2 development, mixed-use housing, and mixed-use projects  
3 are going to have to be dealt with by the city. These  
4 decisions cannot be taken lightly, and they require  
5 the involvement of more than just the few people here  
6 today or those who receive a postcard.

7           The plan, as detailed as it is and as  
8 informative as it is, requires a great deal of time to  
9 review and analyze. In order to make an informed  
10 decision, it is important that the Office of Planning,  
11 that the mayor, Councilmember Bowser, and the other  
12 people who have positions of authority within the city  
13 meet with the public to detail exactly how they are  
14 going to achieve these objectives.

15           Thank you very much.

16           MR. LOUD: Thank you. Good evening. My  
17 name is Marc Loud. I am executive director of Gateway  
18 Georgia Avenue Revitalization Corporation, which  
19 operates along the far northern tip of Georgia Avenue,  
20 beginning at Walter Reed and extending northward

21 actually into Silver Spring several blocks.

22 My comments tonight concern the D.C. part of  
0036

1 the gateway. First, let me applaud the Office of  
2 Planning for the study, the staff and the consultants  
3 involved in the process who were transparent,  
4 available, and open to engagement with the community  
5 throughout the process.

6 I am generally supportive of the gateway  
7 elements of the plan, which I will confine my remarks  
8 to, including the need for additional housing along  
9 upper Georgia Avenue to support a more diversified  
10 retail base.

11 My specific comments will follow. However,  
12 an appropriate preface for all of my comments is that  
13 the Office of Planning must continue to invite and  
14 document community input prior to finalizing this  
15 plan.

16 In terms of specifics with regard to  
17 gateway, the surface parking need loosely discussed in  
18 the plan should focus very specifically on locations  
19 that support the growing retail node around Fern and  
20 Geranium, essentially the 7300 block of Georgia

21 Avenue.

22 There are a number of locations that

0037

1 professionals could look at to identify the

2 feasibility for a parking lot. I simply want to lift

3 up one right now, which is in the rear behind the

4 storefronts in the 7300 block on the west side.

5 There is currently a very large storage

6 facility in the rear of that block, and appropriate

7 study of the potential development of that storage

8 facility into a surface lot that could seed

9 development along the 7300 block is something that

10 ought to be looked at.

11 Secondly, a weekend pilot angled parking

12 program for the Gateway Business District should be

13 studied as an additional means of parking supply for

14 the area.

15 The angled-in parking would begin at Fern

16 and Georgia and extend to Eastern and Georgia and be

17 modeled after angled-in parking in other parts of the

18 city, most notably, Barracks Row.

19 Third, the plan has a huge omission in not

20 addressing the 7600 to 7700 blocks of Georgia Avenue

21 on the west side. Currently, that block which runs,  
22 roughly, from the Diversified Engineering Building,  
0038

1 for those who live in that area and know it, to the  
2 Eddie's Carryout is the worst block in the gateway  
3 corridor in terms of visual appeal, tenant turnover,  
4 and retail diversity.

5 Finalizing a plan for the gateway corridor  
6 without even considering creative land uses, alternate  
7 land uses for that block leaves an unacceptable  
8 status quo in place.

9 Fourthly, the proposal for a three-story  
10 mixed-use site at the northeast corner of Georgia and  
11 Kalmia, roughly, where the Kalmia strip mall is -- I'm  
12 sorry, where the D.C. Auto Line is with 48 spaces of  
13 underground parking is a welcome suggestion in my  
14 opinion. I strongly support this.

15 However, consideration should be given to  
16 potential displacement of existing small businesses in  
17 that block, and subsidies should be made available for  
18 their relocation and potential opportunities and  
19 prefaces made available for their relocation back to  
20 any completed new mixed-use project.

21           Additionally, the D.C. Auto Line site  
22   referenced in the plan is a former gas station, and  
0039

1   environmental issues should be kept in mind when  
2   discussing underground parking for that location.

3           Fifth, there is some site assembly already  
4   underway in the southeast corner of Kalmia Road and  
5   Georgia Avenue. The Kalmia strip mall referenced in  
6   the plan is optimal for a three-story, twenty-unit,  
7   mixed-use project.

8           I believe some flexibility should be given  
9   to potential developers to increase site density  
10   beyond the plan's stated three stories and twenty  
11   residential units.

12          Obviously, though, any such discussions  
13   regarding increased density must be done with zoning  
14   integrity in mind and especially only with the  
15   appropriate support of the surrounding community, ANC  
16   leaders, and the civic associations.

17          Sixth, the proposed vision for the 7400  
18   block east of Georgia Avenue emphasizes a 10- to  
19   15-year time line and it should be made very clear to  
20   the surrounding community that a thoughtful engagement

21 process will accompany any such redevelopment plans  
22 for the 7400 block east.

0040

1 In particular, I want to emphasize some  
2 comments that a colleague of mine, Tony Giancola, will  
3 make later that concerns surrounding neighbors  
4 regarding light, air, privacy, and such for any  
5 structures that would be out of character with their  
6 single-family residential community should be weighed  
7 heavily.

8 (General laughter.)

9 MR. LOUD: Seventh, although not addressed  
10 specifically in the plan -- is time up?

11 (General laughter.)

12 MR. LOUD: Time is up, all right. Walter  
13 Reed is an issue. Finally, in closing, there should  
14 be some consideration given to placement of bicycle  
15 racks along the Gateway Business Corridor. It's a  
16 wonderful way to get area residents to access the  
17 area.

18 Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. ABERNATHY: Thank you, Mr. Loud.



21 I encourage you all to stick within the  
22 three-minute time frame. We have a lot of people on  
0041

1 the list that would like to also comment, and we want  
2 to provide them ample opportunity to.

3 Thank you, Mr. Loud.

4 MS. ABERNATHY: Mr. Tony Giancola.

5 MR. GIANCOLA: Good evening, everyone,  
6 Councilmember Bowser, and Office of Planning. I am  
7 Tony Giancola. I reside at 528 Cedar Street, N.W. I  
8 am also one of the founding board members of the  
9 Gateway Georgia Avenue Revitalization Corporation and  
10 currently serve as its vice president on the D.C.  
11 side. We have a Maryland vice president as well. I  
12 have also been a member of the Advisory Committee on  
13 this effort.

14 First of all, I want to say that I generally  
15 support the draft and direction of the Upper-Georgia  
16 Avenue Land Development Plan and commend the Office of  
17 Planning and the consultants in their efforts to  
18 include citizens and business input and concerns in  
19 the development of this important document. This  
20 draft plan provides a sound revitalization strategy

21 and framework for future development along the  
22 corridor for Decatur Street north to Eastern Avenue.

0042

1 It should also be recognized that this is a  
2 dynamic document subject to changes based on market  
3 demands and business climate. In other words, it is a  
4 document that doesn't stand still. It evolves over  
5 time. Even though we will approve an initial version,  
6 it will be subject to adjustments later as we see fit  
7 as a community. I think that is important to  
8 recognize, particularly as specific sites are  
9 identified.

10 My personal interest of course is focused on  
11 the Gateway area. I will try to be a little quicker  
12 than Loud. I support Zone 1, which is on page 27,  
13 "Housing Development Potential," which is noted  
14 between Eastern Avenue and Fern Street.

15 I would note that the residents of the  
16 housing in this area could also use the Takoma  
17 Metrorail Station, which is actually closer than the  
18 Silver Spring Metrorail Station. It's not noted in  
19 the report.

20 One additional transit item should be a bus

21 service which travels between the Takoma and  
22 Silver Spring Metro Stations traversing along Georgia  
0043

1 Avenue, adding that additional mobility that we need.

2 I would also support the expansion of  
3 housing opportunities through inclusionary zoning and  
4 other city policies. Our city cannot thrive without a  
5 diverse set of housing options that serve the needs of  
6 everyone in the community. I am pleased that this  
7 plan addresses the creation of more housing.

8 I agree with the discussion on the  
9 7400 block of Georgia Avenue between Geranium and  
10 Hemlock Streets. However, I strongly support the  
11 protection of adjoining residential neighborhoods  
12 along Ninth Street so that only compatible, in-fill  
13 development occurs, enhancing the character,  
14 respecting the scale of development of the existing  
15 community.

16 If development occurs in this area, I would  
17 strongly encourage landscape buffer zones and the  
18 stepping down of the height of the development as it  
19 comes closer to the single-family units on the Ninth  
20 Street.

21 Presently, there are no safe pedestrian  
22 street crossings long Georgia Avenue from Geranium up  
0044

1 to Kalmia Street. We feel this is an important  
2 pedestrian safety issue and should be addressed now  
3 and included in the plan. In fact, there are plans  
4 now to put a traffic signal in that area.

5 I remain concerned over the inadequacy of  
6 neighborhood commercial parking and can cite the  
7 Upper-Georgia Avenue commercial area between Fern and  
8 Eastern where insufficient street parking exists. I  
9 guess I wasn't shorter than Loud -- well, physically  
10 maybe.

11 (General laughter.)

12 MR. GIANCOLA: Finally, I would encourage a  
13 serious look at the development of merchants  
14 associations. You can't really have one for the full  
15 length of this project. It needs to be broken up into  
16 neighborhood areas and maybe the four areas that are  
17 mentioned for development could be those four areas.

18 Thank you for listening.

19 MS. ABERNATHY: Sara Green from ANC 4B01.

20 MS. GREEN: Good evening. My name is Sara

21 Green. I am the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner  
22 4B01. That is an area that goes from Eastern Avenue  
0045

1 down to Dahlia, so that the area that Mr. Giancola  
2 just talked about, the Georgia-Hemlock area, is  
3 particularly important to my neighbors.

4 I want to thank him for raising the question  
5 about the Georgia Avenue, the Hemlock and Geranium  
6 intersection. This is really a big deal. Those lots,  
7 as the master plan draft point out, are very shallow.  
8 If you stand at the back of them and you just step off  
9 30 paces, you are going to hit some lovely  
10 single-family homes.

11 If you look at this plan, you will see that  
12 there is a capacity, C2A, which is what it is over  
13 there, to go probably 65 or 75 feet just about as a  
14 matter of right on those lots. That is a very  
15 troubling thing.

16 We have also talked about the investment  
17 that people have made and this city has made and that  
18 you want private investment to have. Well, the people  
19 who live in that community, and it is a lovely  
20 community, and the people who live there have made a

21 significant private investment. They have done so  
22 over 20 or 30 years.

0046

1 The plan is really silent about how that is  
2 going to happen. I am not sure if you can buffer or  
3 step down or do any of that with the size of those  
4 lots, which are show shallow.

5 The plan doesn't have enough of it, of  
6 detail in there. There is a lot of stuff in the  
7 comprehensive plan promising it, but it's not fleshed  
8 out in this draft.

9 The other big issue is surface parking. I  
10 know that is also a big question mark with people.  
11 It's kind of the "elephant in the room." People don't  
12 want to talk about it.

13 There is a concept plan in the draft which  
14 talks about surface parking areas along there,  
15 Georgia-Hemlock, in that area, but I have not heard  
16 support for that.

17 People have repeatedly, communities have  
18 repeatedly come to these meetings and said they really  
19 do not want surface parking. Instead of the plan  
20 saying, "Gee, in the future we're going to have to

21 deal with this," I think the plan has to come out and  
22 be honest with the community and tell them what is  
0047

1 going to happen instead of saying, "Gee, we'll figure  
2 it out at some point in the future." I think that's  
3 not fair. I think it is upsetting.

4 We all want to shop on Georgia Avenue. None  
5 of us are happy going to Bethesda or going to Silver  
6 Spring. I mean, it's a given none of us want that.

7 But I think we have to be honest with our  
8 neighbors about how we are going to achieve that and  
9 the impact that it is going to have on the really  
10 lovely and essential single-family homes that are  
11 along Georgia Avenue.

12 I thank you very much for considering these  
13 issues and for working with us. Thanks again.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. ABERNATHY: Mr. Gerald Johnson.

16 MR. JOHNSON: My name is Gerald Johnson. My  
17 address is 701 Whittier Street, Northwest, Washington,  
18 D.C. I am a resident of Washington, D.C. I own a  
19 commercial property near Georgia and Missouri.

20 Development and redevelopment are two bad

21 words for small, commercial property owners and  
22 homeowners if you are close to either. When

0048

1 development or redevelopment comes along, the city  
2 reappraises property and raises property taxes on what  
3 somebody thinks the property is worth even though no  
4 improvements to the property have been made.

5 Small, commercial property owners on fixed  
6 incomes face a choice that no one who decided to buy  
7 property in the city should have to face, that is,  
8 having to sell the property because the taxes are  
9 going through the roof or raising the rent to help  
10 cover the taxes and the tenant has to leave because  
11 the taxes go up so much.

12 When that happens it creates even more of a  
13 hardship for the small property owner, therefore  
14 causing exactly what the city evidently want --  
15 commercial property gentrification, that is, fixed-  
16 and moderate-income property owners having to sell  
17 because of high taxes, selling to rich developers.

18 The same scenario takes place with the  
19 homeowner; however, it happens when the homeowner  
20 because of the taxes on the home increase because of



21 development or redevelopment and one other reason, and  
22 that reason is some idiot paid too much for his or her

0049

1 home and now the city assesses my taxes on what  
2 somebody else thinks my property is worth.

3 Even though many individuals sell their  
4 property because people are paying more for houses,  
5 some are selling their property because they are being  
6 taxed out of their homes.

7 I call the high and increasing real property  
8 tax "government-assisted gentrification," especially  
9 in the cases where the high and increasing property  
10 tax rate causes a person to have to sell their  
11 property.

12 A person in this city who was trying to hang  
13 on to her property died because she knew that if she  
14 didn't pay the high property tax she would lose her  
15 home. She chose to let her gas be cut off so she  
16 would have enough money to pay her taxes instead of  
17 paying for her gas.

18 In this country, the only one in the world  
19 will sell your home for sometimes a few dollars in  
20 taxes, it will then assist you in finding a homeless

21 shelter for you to live in.

22 (Applause.)

0050

1 MS. ABERNATHY: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

2 The next speaker is Verona Givens. Verona  
3 Givens?

4 MS. GIVENS: Good evening. My name is  
5 Verona Givens. I am a resident at 1516 Underwood  
6 Street, Northwest, and I thank the Committee for  
7 notifying the public to get public input about the  
8 plans in this corridor.

9 My concern mainly is because of safety  
10 issues. I know at one point we had addressed the Fire  
11 Department of a plan to build a new Fire Department at  
12 the old, former Blockbuster location. It is my  
13 understanding that there is a great need for that.

14 Of course, you know if there is an increase  
15 in the population in this area, that is going to just  
16 increase the need for fire apparatus and additional  
17 fire department staff.

18 The same thing I think also includes safety  
19 situations. I feel that at these meetings we should  
20 have someone here that has the expertise in that field

21 as to know how it would impact upon safety if there  
22 was a fire, if you are thinking about additional

0051

1 population coming into the area, additional housing  
2 and retail that could be a factor in our community.

3 It would be nice to have someone from those  
4 departments give their input as to how it would affect  
5 our residents in this neighborhood. That would be  
6 from the Fire Department and the Police Department.  
7 So I would just like that to be considered.

8 I see she did mention that in her  
9 presentation, I think Ms. Hairston did, but to me it  
10 is not enough to really give you a clear picture of  
11 what is going on as far as the plan and changes in  
12 this corridor. I would like to get a little more  
13 input from those two agencies to see how that would  
14 impact and what the plan is regarding building a fire  
15 department.

16 I know that is or was in the plan and  
17 somehow it seems like it has just sort of dropped by  
18 the wayside, and I haven't heard any more about it. I  
19 do attend the Brightwood Association, their community  
20 meetings. I would appreciate some more input in that

21 area.

22 Thank you for your time.

0052

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. ABERNATHY: The next speaker is Tim Shy.

3 MR. SHY: Thank you for the opportunity to

4 speak. Tony and Marc Loud both mentioned parking.

5 Oh, I'm sorry. Tim Shy, 7529 Alaska Avenue,

6 Northwest. We are both residents and we own a

7 business on the 7400 block of Alaska -- I'm sorry, of

8 Georgia. I'm here to speak on both sides of it.

9 Parking really is a big issue. If you want

10 to develop this corridor, you can do big or you can do

11 small. I know you guys worked really hard on the

12 plan, but I don't see a whole lot of innovative ideas

13 on parking.

14 We talked about trolleys, and we talked

15 about other ways of moving other people around. We

16 have really got to get a little bit smarter about how

17 we do parking, because we've got the space we've got;

18 it is not a clean slate.

19 Pedestrian traffic was also mentioned. We

20 sit in our restaurant and watch people get hit

21 occasionally. It is very dangerous on Georgia Avenue.

22 It's unacceptable. It really needs to be reworked

0053

1 into the plan in another way.

2 We are sort of at a competitive disadvantage

3 as a business owner on Georgia. In Silver Spring, the

4 taxes are less. Their services are more. It is

5 difficult and it is going to be difficult to attract

6 other people into this market until we can fix those

7 things.

8 On page 28, I noticed something about hotel

9 development. Actually, that is my day job. I can

10 tell you hotels would love to come into this

11 neighborhood. I am not sure we want them in the

12 neighborhood.

13 I think we have some preconceived notions

14 about a corridor and then find that over time, and

15 even evident in this report, we should pay attention

16 to it.

17 As I said, I will be short. My last point

18 is on page 46 is a time line, which kind of scares me,

19 because "short-term" is defined as two to three years

20 and "long-term" is four years or greater. I think we

21 are going to miss a window of opportunity if we wait  
22 this long in moving forward with any of these things.

0054

1 Thank you for your time.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. ABERNATHY: That concludes the list of  
4 people that had previously signed up. Now I will open  
5 it up for anyone else that is interested in commenting  
6 on the plan recommendations. You can just raise your  
7 hand if you are interested.

8 Would you please come up, state your name,  
9 your affiliation, your address, as well as your  
10 telephone number, and you are allotted three minutes;  
11 okay. Thank you.

12 MR. WHATLEY: Good evening. My name is  
13 Steven Whatley. I am the ANC 4A. I represent parts  
14 of Brightwood, Walter Reed, and Shepherd Park. My  
15 address is 1315 Fern Street, Northwest, Washington,  
16 D.C., and phone is (202) 726-2960.

17 In looking at the plan, there are four  
18 points that come to mind. First, is the issue of the  
19 actual storefront size. I find it hard to imagine  
20 that any large-sized business will want to come into

21 the neighborhood unless the city takes action to  
22 aggregate some of these properties into larger spaces.

0055

1 A small storefront is too small to support Red Lobster  
2 or any of those types of businesses.

3 The second problem that I have noticed is  
4 the question of franchises, and there is a real  
5 dispute going on in the community on various sides as  
6 to whether or not we want Starbucks, or do we want  
7 some of these other stores of similar nature in the  
8 neighborhood.

9 Some people say no, we want nice, unique  
10 types of businesses. But again the question is, the  
11 size of the properties. The last issue I want to  
12 raise is the concern about the parking.

13 I also own a business on Georgia Avenue, and  
14 parking is the big driver. There is a dispute or a  
15 question in the community on both sides of Georgia  
16 Avenue over whether or not we should have surface  
17 parking or whether the city should invest money in new  
18 development to say, "Okay, you tear down this  
19 building. We will subsidize you putting an  
20 underground parking lot below your business."

21           The city has money. Why can't they do that?

22   Because the business is going to pay additional taxes.

0056

1   They are going to collect additional taxes from sales,

2   so in the long run that will benefit the city. The

3   city has to begin to look at unique combinations and

4   not be afraid to invest money where necessary.

5           Those are my comments. Thank you.

6           (Applause.)

7           MS. BROWN: Good evening, Councilmember

8   Bowser, members of the Planning Committee, and

9   community members. I have one concern, others, but

10   this one troubles me more than anything else.

11          MS. ABERNATHY: Can you state your name?

12          MS. BROWN: Jourdan S. Brown, ANC 4A02,

13   Shepherd Park community.

14          MS. ABERNATHY: Your address?

15          MS. BROWN: 7820 Fourteenth Street,

16   Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20012. Telephone number

17   (202) 723-4196.

18          I was at the planning meeting on June 29.

19   On June 30, I received a call about what was happening

20   on Georgia Avenue. Right away, I got in my car and



21 went up there because it was not mentioned at the  
22 planning meeting on the 29th.

0057

1 When I arrived at 7700 Georgia Avenue,  
2 there were tree cutters cutting in the back of that  
3 site. Naturally, I wanted to know what was happening  
4 because I had not heard of any development on that  
5 site.

6 The tree cutters informed us that  
7 condominiums were planned for that site, and they were  
8 cutting trees because they were going to park in the  
9 back of 7700 Georgia Avenue.

10 I became very concerned because as an ANC I  
11 have been very involved in my community and have been  
12 trying to keep up with what was going on, and this  
13 came as an unpleasant surprise to say the least.

14 I called DCRA the following Monday. I  
15 contacted I guess at least four or five persons who  
16 could not give me any information. In fact, one  
17 person even told me to call the Freedom of Information  
18 to get the information.

19 (General laughter.)

20 MS. BROWN: At that point I sent an email to

21 the mayor, the city administrator, the councilmember  
22 in charge of DCRA who has oversight responsibilities.

0058

1 Well, right away I started getting some responses.  
2 But to my surprise, and I have kept all of the email,  
3 I have been getting different information from  
4 different people. What am I to believe?

5 As recently as today, I received an email  
6 finally maybe almost four weeks from a person who  
7 identified himself as the developer. He was giving me  
8 information orally. I asked him to put the  
9 information in the form of an email to me so that when  
10 I gave the information to the community I would have  
11 it correct.

12 Surprisingly, I did not get the answers, so  
13 I really don't know who to believe. The developer at  
14 one said the address was Potomac, Maryland, and  
15 another time it's D.C.

16 I asked for the members of the development  
17 company. I could not get the names from anyone. Even  
18 the developer who promised to send them to me this  
19 evening, he did not send them.

20 I am very, very perturbed about this because

21 I think everything should be transparent, and if there  
22 is a development planned for the area, the community  
0059

1 should have an opportunity to vet it.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. ABERNATHY: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

4 MR. LANG: Good evening. I am Brian Lang.  
5 I am Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 4A. I guess  
6 it is just coincidental that three of us have appeared  
7 in a row.

8 I did not plan on testifying tonight. But  
9 in light of hearing some comments, I wanted to echo my  
10 support for many of them. First is, I do not feel  
11 that there is enough attention paid to innovations in  
12 parking. We have heard about possibly underground  
13 parking, but the predominant theme is surface parking.

14 I would suggest that the planning and  
15 Council consider multistory parking structures, such  
16 as those that appear in Silver Spring and Bethesda,  
17 with a ground floor retail component which may satisfy  
18 the need for some of these larger anchor type  
19 businesses and also be a way to take some of the  
20 burden of the parking off for some of the other local

21 businesses that may center these anchor type retail  
22 components.

0060

1 I also wanted to echo Mr. Loud's comments  
2 about the status of Upper-Georgia Avenue. Likewise,  
3 the plan overlooks the 6200 block, specifically the  
4 west side of Georgia Avenue.

5 The Emery Beacon of Light has taken the  
6 initiative in the storefront improvements for the east  
7 side of that block, but the west side really is an  
8 eyesore and is an impediment to drawing other retail  
9 establishments to the surrounding area.

10 Potential developers come in and they look  
11 at the existing appearance of that west side of the  
12 6200 block, and they are immediately turned away by  
13 its appearance.

14 While we talk about the nuclear zones at  
15 Piney Branch and Missouri Avenue, too little attention  
16 is paid to these really well-established shopping  
17 center types in the intermediate area that I think  
18 could fill an immediate void.

19 Lastly, well, two more points. One, I don't  
20 think the city has paid enough attention to

21 incorporating workforce and affordable housing in the  
22 redevelopment or relocation of the fire station.

0061

1 I think the District should look to  
2 surrounding jurisdictions, especially the City of  
3 Alexandria with their proposed fire station at their  
4 Potomac Yards' development, which really quite  
5 attractively and effectively satisfies the needs for  
6 workforce housing with providing emergency services to  
7 that growing area.

8 There was an article in "The Denver Post" a  
9 couple of months ago with a proposed rendering which I  
10 would encourage Councilmember Bowser and the Office of  
11 Planning to take a look at.

12 Lastly, I have severe concerns about the  
13 viability of the project at Missouri Avenue and  
14 Georgia. I have heard from multiple sources that that  
15 deal may not proceed, so I want to encourage the  
16 Office of Planning and the councilmember to pursue  
17 discussions with that developer to see if, in fact, it  
18 is not proceeding or what it may take to make it  
19 proceed or attract a new developer to come in. Really  
20 that is critical to kick starting this plan, because I

21 think we have been counting so much on that project  
22 moving forward.

0062

1 Thank you for your time. I didn't give my  
2 address. It is 6205 Twelfth Street, Northwest, in the  
3 District; (202) 882-4526.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. BROWNER: Hi. Edgar Browner. I will  
6 make it short. I would just like to see more  
7 attention to some emergency healthcare, childcare,  
8 seniors, and something dealing with the handicapped.

9 MS. ABERNATHY: What's your name?

10 MR. BROWNER: Oh. Edgar Browner,  
11 4527 Georgia Avenue and I also own a property on  
12 Whittier. Thank you. Oh, my telephone number is  
13 (202) 207-5244.

14 MS. ABERNATHY: You have more time.

15 MR. BROWNER: That's all I wanted to say.

16 (General laughter.)

17 MR. CASH: How are you doing? My name is  
18 Michael Cash. I live in the 5200 block of Thirteenth  
19 Street, Northwest. There are a few things I want to  
20 say. Before y'all start going building these higher

21 buildings, recognize that we live in an area the fire  
22 trucks have a hard enough time getting around in.

0063

1       The next thing, any building that goes past  
2 these, you're going to need the big trucks down here  
3 to go in there to fight big fires. You don't want to  
4 go building too high and trying to get a truck to  
5 maneuver around these little side streets. It's not  
6 going to happen.

7       There is one other problem. I'm finding out  
8 the easiest way how the parking is going to come.  
9 They are going to build these buildings, then the city  
10 is going to look at it and say, "We don't have enough  
11 space for parking."

12       These houses that are sitting behind it, I  
13 can see that going. I really can. Just the same way  
14 they are taking people's houses through property  
15 taxes, y'all know that nasty word, "eminent domain."  
16 They will get you every time.

17       There is no need for these big-style  
18 buildings on Georgia Avenue. Because if you look  
19 downtown, that's all downtown is built on. A gateway  
20 is supposed to be something that people look and can

21 see the whole area, not look at big, giant skyscrapers  
22 standing over top of them. I am all for development,  
0064

1 but I'm for positive development.

2 Georgia Avenue has been overlooked for years  
3 like everybody says. We do need some businesses in  
4 here, but we need some businesses that are actually  
5 going to relate to the community.

6 Because just about everybody who lives in  
7 this area, like they said, 57 percent of the District  
8 of Columbia's long-term residents come from this area.  
9 If you start building the way you want to build,  
10 goodbye 57 percent.

11 Thank you.

12 A PARTICIPANT: That's right.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. BOWSER: My name is Renee Bowser and I  
15 am ANC Commissioner for 4D02. I live at 5322 Second  
16 Street, Northwest, and my telephone number is  
17 (202) 882-1733. My single-member district is  
18 New Hampshire to Fifth and Missouri down to Gallatin.

19 My question, following on what Commissioner  
20 Brown asked, it's my understanding that one piece of



21 emergency legislation out of about 44 pieces was  
22 passed about a week and a half ago.

0065

1 I understand from attending some meetings  
2 that one of the pieces of property that was passed for  
3 selling to a developer was on Upper-Georgia Avenue.  
4 That is all I could learn from Councilmember Jack  
5 Evans at a meeting that I attended that he talked  
6 about some of the other public property that was sold.

7 I am here to urge that when we have public  
8 property sold we should have something in the plan  
9 that it should not be sold by emergency legislation,  
10 and that the ANCs who are in that area should get  
11 knowledge of that.

12 I don't know where on Upper-Georgia Avenue  
13 that was. It was emergency legislation which  
14 councilmembers only got the night before. I know that  
15 from having read it.

16 Did any ANC commissioners that notice that  
17 public property on Upper-Georgia Avenue was being  
18 sold? Is that going to be part of the Office of  
19 Planning as we decide what type of development will be  
20 on Georgia Avenue?

21 I imagine Councilmember Bowser can give more  
22 detail. This was emergency legislation submitted by  
0066

1 the Mayor and six of the properties were part of that  
2 emergency legislation, different acts, separate  
3 legislation.

4 One was the West End Library, which has  
5 gotten a lot of publicity because the neighborhood  
6 doesn't want it the way it is being done with the East  
7 Bank even being named in the legislation.

8 The mention of the Upper-Georgia Avenue  
9 peaked my interest because that is here in Ward 4, and  
10 that is what we are here about. I think we should  
11 find out about that and bring that to the public, make  
12 that transparent.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 A PARTICIPANT: That's right.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BOWSER: Well, I won't take up  
17 too much time answering questions, but I will be here  
18 for any residents who have specific questions. There  
19 was a piece of property sold on Georgia Avenue. It  
20 was in the 7300 block. It is the old Blockbuster

21 site.

22 This was the site that was owned privately.

0067

1 The city then bought it from the developer with threat  
2 of eminent domain to use it for a fire station. It  
3 was mentioned by one of the residents earlier. The  
4 city then decided that it no longer needed that  
5 property for the fire station. That property was sold  
6 back to the original owner for the same price.

7 A PARTICIPANT: That's crazy.

8 (Simultaneous discussion.)

9 MS. ABERNATHY: This is just for public  
10 hearing to receive comments on the plan. Thank you  
11 Councilmember Bowser for addressing that.

12 Do you have any--? Okay.

13 MR. GREEN: Good evening. Mike Green,  
14 Ward 4 resident. I listened to a dynamic presentation  
15 I think given by Mr. Johnson. I would like for the  
16 Office of Planning four representatives or five that  
17 are here today to address his concerns.

18 In my remaining two and a half minutes that  
19 I will have, I would like to ask Ms. Abernathy,  
20 Ms. Hairston, and Ms. Gardner, of course Ms. Bowser,

21 and Ms. Tregoning to address his issue concerning  
22 development and redevelopment and why property taxes  
0068

1 often go up. He described it as "Some idiot paid too  
2 much for a home, so therefore property taxes go up,  
3 and people are losing their homes."

4 I would like for the five of you or one of  
5 you all to talk about that issue because that is very,  
6 very important to the residents here. Why do I have  
7 to lose a home because somebody paid too much for a  
8 home or a developer came in and started a business in  
9 the area?

10 Thank you very much.

11 A PARTICIPANT: That's right, that's right.  
12 Answer it.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. ABERNATHY: Are there any other  
15 community residents or property owners that would like  
16 to comment?

17 Yes?

18 MS. WHEELER: Good evening. I am Faith  
19 Wheeler, 818 Whittier Place Northwest; telephone  
20 number 882-7565. I am an ANC Commissioner in 4B02.

21 I would like to talk just a little bit about  
22 questions. I think questions are about as important  
0069

1 as answers, and we have had some very good questions  
2 and concerns raised tonight that need to be  
3 considered.

4 We want to know what will make these areas  
5 in Upper-Georgia Avenue more attractive for neighbors  
6 living here now, wanting to stay here as well as the  
7 visitors. How can we increase the stabilization and  
8 vibrancy of the communities, not just chase people  
9 out?

10 A PARTICIPANT: That's right.

11 MS. WHEELER: How can we prepare very well  
12 for serious climate change approaching, that is  
13 approaching slowly but it is approaching?  
14 Considerations that I think we will need to pay  
15 attention: safety, I'll go very quickly and then go  
16 back to them, questions of vibrant commerce, housing,  
17 transportation, and parking.

18 Safety now and into the future, safety  
19 whether it is the holdup, which we just had again this  
20 afternoon at S&S Liquors in Takoma despite a police

21 camera up across the street and in spite of our police  
22 patrol who had just left the store.

0070

1 Clusters of vibrant commerce that serve both  
2 neighborhood daily needs as well as visitors.  
3 Environmentally sound housing to stabilize the  
4 community, multi-income, none of this we will  
5 apportion a certain part for low-income.

6 A PARTICIPANT: That's right, that's right.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. WHEELER: We have to have a mix. This  
9 is who we are. We are a mix of people. This is what  
10 makes our community vibrant.

11 Multiuse of buildings, right here along this  
12 part of Georgia we have some bad examples of  
13 relatively new buildings. CVS a few years ago, no  
14 housing above it.

15 The mayor and all, past mayor and present  
16 mayor, want to bring in more housing here. But here  
17 on a broad boulevard of Georgia Avenue, no housing  
18 above these new retail places, CVS.

19 Just very recently, McDonald's just around  
20 the corner here on Georgia Avenue rebuilt their store

21 and no housing above that, either. Why? Why here on  
22 Georgia Avenue no housing, no going up a little bit  
0071

1 right on this commercial corridor? But in residential  
2 neighborhoods like Takoma, yes, oh, big-time taller  
3 buildings. That doesn't seem quite right.

4       Transportation, we need to make things more  
5 comfortable for bike riders and pedestrians. I just  
6 got something in the mail today or yesterday from the  
7 American Planning Association talking about a program  
8 to learn more about complete streets, how to make room  
9 for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users on your  
10 auto-oriented roads.

11       I loved Tony Giancola's suggestion to have a  
12 bus running along Georgia Avenue between the Takoma  
13 Metro Station and Silver Spring Metro Station to serve  
14 people who are, in fact, customers on Georgia Avenue  
15 and residents as well.

16       Parking, parking obviously has been raised.  
17 Recently, I got an email from a business owner in  
18 Silver Spring, Brenda Schmoke of the Alchemy Store,  
19 petitioning Ike Leggett and Montgomery County for more  
20 parking here as well as there I should say in South

21 Silver Spring as opposed to -- I'll be done in just a  
22 second -- the center of downtown Silver Spring in  
0072

1 order to attract business there in South Silver Spring  
2 which is just across the line from the north part of  
3 our Upper-Georgia Avenue. It is very important and  
4 important to do in a very sensitive way.

5 As a wrap-up, I would urge us to look to see  
6 how we can make our community safe, more beautiful  
7 commercially, socially, environmentally viable for us  
8 who live here, for visitors we want to come here. If  
9 our city and our community where we live isn't  
10 attractive, why do we want to live here.

11 Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. ABERNATHY: Thank you very much. This  
14 concludes the opportunity for our office on behalf of  
15 the mayor to receive public testimony regarding the  
16 Upper-Georgia Avenue Land Use Plan. We will continue  
17 to accept written testimony from now until  
18 September 28. My contact information is located on  
19 the bottom of the agenda, so please send all written  
20 testimony. If you want my information, my name again



21 is Malaika Abernathy. I am with the Office of  
22 Planning in Ward 4. Our address is 801 North Capitol  
0073

1 Street, Suite 4000. The ZIP Code is 20002. Once  
2 again, copies of the plan, if you need copies of the  
3 plan, they can be downloaded on line at our URL, which  
4 is [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).

5 A PARTICIPANT: Can you say that again a  
6 little slower?

7 MS. ABERNATHY: Let me check to make sure I  
8 got it. [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).

9 Thank you very much. We will stick around  
10 for questions, for you to ask questions. Thank you  
11 very much for attending this. I look forward to  
12 working with you all in the future.

13 (Whereupon, at 7:51 p.m., the hearing was  
14 adjourned.)

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